

AIR COMMAND AND STAFF COLLEGE

AIR UNIVERSITY

**DEMYSTIFYING RPA OPERATIONS POST OEF:**

Now is the time for the USAF ISR team to enhance multilateral partnerships across COCOMs and reverse the tide of public opinion toward intelligence gathering and kinetic RPA strikes...

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A Research Report Submitted to the Faculty

In Partial Fulfillment of the Graduation Requirements

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3 April 2013

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## **ABSTRACT**

President Obama's opening statement in the US National Security Strategy (NSS) states, "As influence extends to more countries and capitals, we will build new partnerships in every region, and strengthen international standards and institutions... Our long-term security will come not from our ability to instill fear in other peoples, but through our capacity to speak to their hopes." As Operation ENDURING FREEDOM (OEF) draws to a close, the United States has an opportunity to rebalance its forces and focus on this principle of the NSS. Since 2004, there has been an emphasis on intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) full-motion video (FMV) platforms and their unique ability to bring real time situational awareness to a multitude of users. Yet, this unique capability also brings new challenges. Covert action by government agencies utilizing remotely piloted aircraft (RPAs) to track and kinetically attack terrorist operatives has proven successful, however, it has come at a cost to the reputation of the entire RPA force and ISR community. Consequently, 'drones' are now viewed by many in the United States and abroad as purely covert weapons of death and destruction. This needs to change as it leads to a negative impact on US policy and serves to help the cause of the enemy. RPAs, and their manned ISR aircraft cousins, are awareness enhancers, capable of a multitude of missions including humanitarian assistance and disaster recovery. This paper explores benefits of utilizing US Air Force FMV ISR assets to strengthen multilateral partnerships across Combatant Commands (COCOMs) and revitalize the reputation of the RPA and ultimately US foreign policy.

## ***INTRODUCTION***

‘Where necessary, **through a range of capabilities**, we will continue to take direct action against those terrorists who pose the gravest threat to Americans’ – President Obama (2013 State of the Union Address).<sup>1</sup>

Since September 11, 2001, the United States has been engaged against Al Qaeda terrorists and those states that support or harbor them. President Obama’s quote alludes this policy is not likely to end anytime soon. As Al Qaeda cells move into other regions of the world the United States will pursue them. Though justifiable to most, this policy carries implications based on some of the methods used to ‘take direct action’ against terrorists. One of the most active methods used in the ‘war on terror’ has been remotely piloted aircraft (RPAs). Unlike other Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR) platforms, RPAs offer one-of-a-kind persistence as well as the ability to strike and destroy targets when the opportunity arises. Primarily using full motion video (FMV), and often in conjunction with other sensors, RPAs are able to loiter over targeted areas for long periods while their FMV feeds are beamed to locations across the world. This ability to use reach-back technology allows for enormous flexibility in how intelligence information is processed, exploited, and disseminated (PED). In this new way of war it is important to understand who is really involved and how perceptions eventually impact US policy. Although incredibly successful, kinetic strikes by RPAs can be very controversial and may actually do more harm than good when it comes to building partnerships. Rather than face further consternation of world opinion, the United States needs to take mitigated steps to reduce the negative perception generated by RPAs and ISR operations. Consequently, this paper argues for cost-effective post OEF utilization of conventional force RPAs and PED, to enhance alliances across COCOMs, and restore perceptions of RPA use for stronger long-term multinational partnerships in the global fight against terrorism.

***Why it is critical to ‘demystify’ negative perceptions about RPAs and ISR operations to the global community:***

Unfortunately, as with many new technologies, this evolving method for ISR, PED, and kinetic strike is easily misunderstood and often negatively reported in the media. A good example being a recent online article (March 16, 2013) titled, “US seeks to expand assassination drone attacks to Syria.”<sup>2</sup> The title alone sets the tone for readers that ‘drones’ are simply tools of assassination and have little other value and that the United States is intent on using them for this purpose wherever they can. Numerous online articles and ‘mainstream’ news outlets are quick to point out the controversial aspects of ‘drones’ but rarely do they focus on the positive. This mindset besieges RPAs and impacts US policy abroad. It is important to understand RPAs and their PED nodes are employed by a variety of organizations to include conventional US military forces, special operations forces, and other government agencies (OGAs). RPAs and their PED entities do not all operate under the same chain of command and thus have different mission sets, rules for collection, and rules of engagement. Not readily understood by the public, general misperceptions can harm the reputation of the entire RPA and ISR community, based on what is a small percentage of mostly OGA kinetic operations. For example, it is difficult to go a few weeks without hearing about a ‘drone attack’ by the United States against a target somewhere in Pakistan or Yemen and the negative world opinion that follows. President Obama has acknowledged these OGA RPA attacks and maintains they will continue as a necessary tool against alleged terrorists, despite being controversial both abroad as well as within the United States.<sup>3</sup> The shroud of secrecy required for what are primarily now OGA kinetic operations, coupled with a host of other issues, including collateral damage and civilian casualties, negatively impact perceptions of the United States and without a mitigation strategy are proving

to be somewhat counter-productive.<sup>4</sup> According to a Pew Research poll conducted in 2012, “74% of Pakistanis now consider the United States an enemy, up from 64% in 2009.”<sup>5</sup> The same study cites the implications RPA strikes are having on US credibility within the international community: Germany (81% disapproval), Egypt (89% disapproval), and Turkey (81% disapproval).<sup>6</sup> The United States needs to address these misperceptions and focus on building more multilateral partnerships which will pay dividends in the future. Otherwise, the breeding ground for those sympathetic to the plight of the ‘targeted’ will grow. As OEF draws to a close, this may limit the future ability of the United States to employ RPAs from allied bases when sent to other Combatant Commands (COCOMs).

Further information on the negative effects of OGA RPA strikes is provided in a September 2012 study released by Stanford Law in conjunction with New York University School of Law. This study evaluated the number of ‘high-level’ terrorist suspects killed compared with the total number of casualties by RPA strikes in Pakistan. According to the report, the total number of ‘high-level’ militant casualties is only about two percent.<sup>7</sup> If correct, this indicates high casualty rates for civilians. The report criticizes OGA RPA strikes in that they have, “traumatized innocent residents and largely been ineffective, especially when compared to the cost.”<sup>8</sup> This conclusion was based on nine months of research and two investigations in Pakistan. The report continues, “more than 130 interviews with victims, witnesses, and experts, and the review of thousands of pages of documentation and media reporting—this report presents evidence of the damaging and counterproductive effects of current drone strike policies.”<sup>9</sup> The report cites evidence that RPA strikes have facilitated recruitment to “violent non-state armed groups” and led to further violent acts. One such example being a suicide bomber who targeted a CIA compound in Khost, Afghanistan who

identified drone strikes as his motivation. Drones were also mentioned as a motivating factor for Faisal Shahzad, the individual convicted for attempting to detonate a car bomb in New York City's Times Square in 2010.<sup>10</sup> The study concludes that some people in the Waziristan region of Pakistan (an area where most of the OGA RPA strikes have occurred) are not clear as to why US attacks have struck 'innocent people' in their community. This is disturbing because it has led to some Waziris, "believing that the US actively seeks to kill them simply for being Muslims, viewing the drone campaign as part of a religious crusade against Islam."<sup>11</sup> This perception propagates the idea that RPA strikes are possibly doing more harm than good. To be fair, the study recognizes that OGA RPA strikes have disrupted Al-Qaida and Taliban operations but have come with a cost. Ultimately, the goal of the study is for the United States to reevaluate its RPA policy and to open dialogue among the American public.

As the evidence above suggests, OGA RPA strikes are causing at least some consternation among allies and ultimately impacting US policy. The logical question that follows is how should this dilemma be fixed? This paper is not about to suggest OGA RPA strikes need to be discontinued, but rather rebalanced with non-kinetic RPA use by conventional forces. One such path to better or more open partnership is to 'demystify' portions of the massive ISR and PED architecture and educate the public, both at home and abroad, about acknowledged RPA operations. The United States concedes that OGA RPAs are not the only 'drones' prosecuting targets. Conventional RPAs are also used to attack enemy forces. The stark difference is these strikes are more readily acknowledged and are a mere segment of the overall capability of ISR and the situational awareness they provide. The general public may still not agree with this type of employment, but when compared to OGA strikes, they are a bit more palatable, especially if they are not shrouded in secrecy. It is here the United States needs to try

and strike a balance to take attention squarely off the OGA RPA strikes and put public attention back on the tactical and strategic advantage gained by RPAs. This is not to suggest the military needs to reveal tactics used by RPAs and ISR but rather at least showcase the benefits persistent ISR can bring. What needs to be focused on is that ISR is often used for positive purposes, especially conventional force ISR that produces FMV and still images which can assist humanitarian operations. Additionally, RPAs are used to ensure clear passage for allied forces operating in hostile environments. As the US Military begins to divest forces from Afghanistan, ISR assets will likely be reallocated to the other COCOMs.<sup>12</sup> This presents an opportunity for the US to leverage its existing RPA capability in cooperation with other allied nation's military forces. As forces are rebalanced, there is a smart, practical, and cost-effective opportunity for the USAF to showcase RPAs and other ISR technology in a positive light. Otherwise, the United States risks a 'Tet Offensive' of sorts where RPAs could help win the battle against terrorism, but ultimately will lose the war of public opinion at home and overseas. In turn, this may force the Obama administration to abandon support for what is clearly an advantage in the fight against terrorism for fear of alienation of other nations or loss of confidence by the American public.

The time to act is now. The USAF needs to use portions of its existing ISR and PED fleets to seize the opportunity of a changing dynamic in a post OEF environment. Allied partners need to be included in the planning process and in some cases co-located with conventional RPA PED nodes so they can quickly assist with military or humanitarian endeavors. This will demonstrate to the world the positive capabilities that RPAs can be used for as well as fortify the intentions of US foreign policy. Fortunately, the overall infrastructure already exists to cost-effectively base ISR assets and PED nodes across COCOMS and build

multilateral partnerships to win hearts and minds in favor of RPA operations. The RPA force and its associated infrastructure are youthful and can offer a decent return on taxpayer investment if used in other COCOMs. Department of Defense spending on unmanned aircraft went from approximately \$284 million in 2000 to almost \$4 billion in 2012.<sup>13</sup> With the money spent on RPAs and PED substructure, it is unfathomable not to keep using this relatively new capability. For the military, strong partnerships are essential for successful future operations and RPAs offer a method to achieve collaboration. Multilateral cooperation limits the spread of Al Qaida and other extremist entities and strengthens partner nation internal defense capabilities. RPAs offer an easy and inexpensive information sharing alternative to a large footprint of troops on the ground while demonstrating US' commitment to allied partners. Their effectiveness in other theaters of operation should not be undersold.

***Understanding the roots of moral dilemma in the US toward RPA strikes and the legal ramifications associated with RPA employment:***

The 'War on Terror', by its very nature, is a conflict that involves unique strategy and justification for offensive strikes to combat suspected terrorists or insurgents. In today's information media environment, morality, capability, and law are linked together more than ever as policymakers, generals, military personnel, and citizens' grapple with rationalizing their actions using advanced technology against asymmetrically inclined non-state actors. President Obama addressed the issue in a recent interview with CNN when he stated, "[In relation to RPA strikes], this is something that you have to struggle with."<sup>14</sup> Two philosophical and thus legal schools of thought dominate domestic political argument for and against RPA attacks. The first is realism and the second is 'just war theory.'<sup>15</sup> Both theories are important to understand

because both have an enormous impact on how United States policy is formulated. Eventually public opinion or legal challenge might determine if the US continues to use RPAs for tracking and striking terrorists.

The realist argument concludes there is nothing unlawful about waging war against terrorists because military necessity serves as a guide for strategy and morality.<sup>16</sup> Opponents of RPA strikes claim this is the national security strategy the US is currently pursuing and that it is having a cancerous effect on US foreign policy. The realist view is not new; Carl Von Clausewitz wrote about the need to approach an enemy using principles of realism, “Kind hearted people might of course think there was some ingenious way to disarm or defeat an enemy without too much bloodshed, and might imagine this is the true goal of the art of war. Pleasant as it sounds it is a fallacy that must be exposed: war is such a dangerous business that the mistakes which come from kindness are the very worst.”<sup>17</sup> If Clausewitz were alive today, and part of President Obama’s National Security Team, he would likely advocate continued use of kinetic RPAs despite the pressures of international law and domestic public opinion. Opinions of Clausewitz aside, today’s realists simply see RPAs as a necessary tool being used to hunt and kill extremists before they can do harm. The realist view seems to discard the notion that OGA RPA strikes may actually do more harm than good in the long run and should somehow be counterbalanced.

In contrast, ‘just war’ theory is a popular and potentially legal alternative to the realism argument of how to approach direct action against suspected terrorists. This is what anti-RPA strike advocates support and follows the same legal argument used in favor of President Obama’s decision to abolish water boarding as an interrogation method used on suspected terrorists. This theory incorporates the idea that world-public opinion matters because of its impact on US

foreign policy and the need to stringently adhere to international law. The analysis of 'just war' theory by American political theorist, Michael Walzer, explains that any unjust conduct cancels out a just cause.<sup>18</sup> Walzer writes, "[Reprisals] legitimates actions otherwise criminal, if these actions are undertaken in response to crimes previously committed by the enemy."<sup>19</sup> In other words, soldiers and statesmen alike need to take the moral high-ground and not seek retribution with a similar strategy or tactics initially used against them, otherwise, "reprisals create a chain of wrongdoing."<sup>20</sup> In theory, this behavior will sway the world, and eventually the enemy, into the opposing side's favor, or as Walzer denotes, "it is important to stress that the moral reality of war is not fixed by the actual activities of the soldiers but by the opinions of mankind."<sup>21</sup> In basic terms, this theory embraces the notion that RPA strikes have emboldened the resolve of terrorists and created more enemies toward the United States.

Without legal precedence on the issue the fact is RPA strikes are likely to continue. According to numerous sources, since early 2009, the Obama administration has authorized over 280 strikes in Pakistan. This is six times greater than what was authorized during the Bush administration.<sup>22</sup> Accurate casualty figures are hard to come by but estimates put the toll from RPA strikes somewhere between 1,500 and 2,600.<sup>23</sup> The result has been an increasingly robust stance against RPA strikes across the Middle East and Africa. Kinetic RPA strikes are extremely unpopular in Pakistan, with the Pakistani parliament voting in 2012 to end authorization of initial support.<sup>24</sup> The biggest outcry comes from collateral damage incidents which both sides acknowledge have occurred. Quoted during his recent confirmation hearings, CIA Director Nominee Mr. John Brennan said, "Despite extraordinary precautions taken by the United States, civilians have been accidentally injured or worse-killed in these strikes. It is exceedingly rare, but it has happened."<sup>25</sup> Fortunately, current data suggests collateral damage incidents are on the

decline.<sup>26</sup> Despite the risk of collateral damage, the United States has no plans on curtailing what is an effective program and insists all applicable international laws are followed in the pursuit of terror suspects.

It is not just attacks in Pakistan that present a legal and moral problem. Dependence on international law gets blurry when applied to terrorism or counterinsurgents for strikes in Afghanistan as well. The prominent counterinsurgency author, David Galula, provides further interpretation of international law and its application to the asymmetric war ongoing with terrorists.<sup>27</sup> The rules of war are far from binding to insurgents or terrorists who usually enter the battle space as non-state actors.<sup>28</sup> Furthermore, today's terrorist organizations rarely conform to 'rules' associated with Western ideas of morality and law. Galula understands this difference and paraphrases Clausewitz when he writes, "Insurgency is the pursuit of the policy of a party, inside a country, by every means."<sup>29</sup> In other words, the counterinsurgent, or terrorist fight, will never be conventional on a traditional battlefield as this is counter intuitive to the asymmetric advantage sought by insurgents or terrorists. Like the ongoing situation with detainees in Guantanamo, Cuba, RPA strikes continue to provide legal and moral challenges for the United States.

Like most controversial policies there is no correct answer and the legality of the issue will always be questioned. Employment of OGA RPA strikes remains contentious as the United States continues to press its advantage with these weapons as long as possible. Foreign and domestic proponents of 'just war' theory highlight the harm these strikes cause emphasizing that Pakistan is not at war with the United States and thus should be held legally accountable internationally. Moreover, terrorists and counterinsurgents alike continue to fear effectiveness of RPA strikes and hope the pressure caused by the 'just war' rhetoric causes a change in US

policy. A recent CNN article covering RPA strikes in Pakistan stated, “It highlights harm beyond death and physical injury experienced by people living in Pakistan’s tribal northwest region, who hear drones hover 24 hours a day. People have to live with the fear that a strike could come down on them at any moment of the day or night...”<sup>30</sup> Assuming the United States continues its policy of kinetic RPA operations, as this paper advocates, further mitigation steps should be taken to lessen the effect of these strikes. There needs to be a public relations push to showcase the distinction between OGA and conventional USAF ISR assets. RPAs should be based across COCOMs, with routine training designed to be ready to provide instantaneous ISR support to allied nations and to strengthen multilateral partnerships. Conventional force RPAs must be deployed on short notice to assist friendly governments during a humanitarian crisis. Such goodwill actions of the United States will help win the ‘just war’ argument and demystify the beleaguered reputation OGA RPA strikes perpetuate.

***The US can improve RPA perceptions and aid its policy by rebalancing ISR assets across COCOMs and making them routinely available for humanitarian aid and disaster relief:***

As of March 2013, the USAF continuously maintained 59 daily MQ-1/MQ-9 RPA combat air patrols (CAPs) mostly in the CENTCOM Theater of operation.<sup>31</sup> These RPAs are separate and distinct from OGA RPA operations. Furthermore, these CAPs are augmented by a robust number of manned MC-12 FMV aircraft as well as additional manned and unmanned ISR assets. Other COCOMs have access to MQ-1 Predators and MQ-9 Reapers but nothing approaching the level of CENTCOM. However, this is changing and will continue to evolve as Afghanistan operations end. According to a recent published interview with the General Mike Hostage, Commander of Air Combat Command, senior leaders are looking at options for the

future.<sup>32</sup> Some of those options include RPA force size, basing, and affordability. The stated goal of the Air Force was to have 65 CAPs by the end of 2013 but that number is arbitrary and not based on a specific future needs analysis.<sup>33</sup> With the conclusion of OEF in sight, the other COCOMs see requirements that could be met by RPA CAPs, making the timing right to start planning the reallocation of these precious resources.

Fortunately, the PED infrastructure is already in place to help make this cost-effective. The USAF Distributed Common Ground System (DCGS), consisting of eleven worldwide PED nodes (including Air National Guard Units) and other PED support squadrons, currently uses reach-back to PED data from RPAs. These RPAs operate predominately in the CENTCOM area of responsibility. However, RPA missions can be flown almost anywhere in the world with the PED support being accomplished by reach-back at the DCGS ground sites. There are some limitations to the amount and types of sorties that can be flown, but it is possible to continuously fly RPA CAPs and provide reach-back PED in separate COCOMs simultaneously. The current USAF DCGS construct has five active duty sites (two in the US and three abroad), with each site specialized in regional expertise based on where they are located. The benefit is that AF DCGS retains its worldwide PED capability but each individual site is able to enhance the cooperation it has with the specific COCOM it is assigned to support. As active duty AF DCGS starts to work more missions within their assigned COCOM, possibilities for military personnel exchanges with allied nations in those COCOMs will grow. Security concerns can be mitigated with operational networks that allow foreign partners access (this was accomplished in CENTCOM with what is called the CENTRIX network). DCGS humanitarian support missions can have data uploaded to the All Partners Access Network (APAN) which allows for imagery and FMV products to be seen at the unclassified level. This paid huge dividends when an MQ-1 was used to support the

2010 Haiti earthquake disaster relief mission in the SOUTHCOM area of operations. The utility of RPAs for humanitarian assistance was demonstrated as the MQ-1's FMV feed was used to support rescue operations by ensuring road routes were passable and to set strategies for which routes to clear.<sup>34</sup> Using the unclassified APAN network, DCGS crews were able to post images which allowed relief organizations to support the hardest hit areas and to see where refugee populations were gathering.

This humanitarian capability will grow as more RPAs become available in other COCOMS. Another excellent example of a humanitarian support opportunity occurred in March 2011 after a massive earthquake struck just off the coast of Northern Japan. High altitude Global Hawk RPAs were used to provide imagery assistance to the Japanese government. Using unclassified dissemination tools, DCGS personnel were able to deliver critical imagery products to a host of rescue and relief personnel. This example of humanitarian assistance exemplifies efforts to strengthen partnership building in the region. Imagine if PACOM had medium altitude continuous CAP capability provided by MQ-1 and MQ-9s in such humanitarian emergencies; this would be a great way to showcase RPAs as positive allied support mechanism.

Unfortunately, natural disasters will happen again and the US must be ready to respond. Whether flooding in Pakistan, or an Earthquake in Mali, disasters can strike in any COCOM at any time. This is why the United States needs MQ-1s and MQ-9s (among other ISR assets) based across COCOMs. RPA operators need to be trained and equipped to work with their area specific AF DCGS and with allied partners to provide prompt response to humanitarian tasking. RPAs offer a persistent look capability to help allied nations respond to catastrophes as never before. One DCGS ISR mission commander summed it up best when he wrote, "Employing remotely piloted ISR platforms during such operations yields multiple benefits for the United

States, not only by enhancing national security but also by increasing US moral authority and strengthening international friendships by assisting people in need. Furthermore, policy makers demonstrate to the American people that their investment in weapon systems is useful for a wide range of missions, including humanitarian operations.”<sup>35</sup>

***In addition to humanitarian support, RPAs offer cost-effective enhanced ISR capability for each COCOM:***

Not all future RPA and ISR cooperation with host nations will be solely based on humanitarian operations. Most collaboration with allies will continue to be for traditional ISR missions. As OEF draws to a close, other COCOMs will begin employing RPAs; which allows for another opportunity to rebuild their beleaguered reputation. This also allows for allies to increase their tactical ISR capability and in-turn their multilateral cooperation with the United States. Initially, as RPAs are introduced into new COCOMs, there will be supporters and detractors. The detractors will likely dissipate once they realize the cost-effective benefits RPAs bring to their theater and that they are not solely covert attack weapons.

For example, as the United States shifts focus to the Pacific region, pundits will argue that MQ-1 and MQ-9s are not suitable or even survivable in the event of conflict.<sup>36</sup> In a traditional sense, the pundits are correct in that Pacific based conventional RPAs are much more vulnerable against adversaries operating in contested environments with advanced integrated air defense capabilities (IADS). RPAs are slow and have no defensive countermeasures making them easily susceptible to even non-sophisticated IADS. However, to expound on this issue may be missing the point. According to General Hostage, “Predators and Reapers can be used in the Pacific region but not in a highly contested environment. We may be able to use them on the

fringes and on the edges and in small locals, but we're much more likely to lose them if somebody decides to challenge us for that space."<sup>37</sup> The key is what General Hostage calls small locals, where PACOM based RPAs can make a difference and help build multilateral partnerships with allied militaries during training exercises and for traditional ISR missions. There is no 'shooting war' going on in the Pacific. Until that happens, RPAs can still make a difference in both humanitarian and more traditional ISR roles. It is important to remember these assets are unmanned for a reason. They can be 'risked' when the stakes are high without losing aircrew.

In other COCOMs, RPAs have already proven themselves as valuable enhancers to the traditional ISR mission. In SOUTHCOM, larger Global Hawk RPAs are contributing to counter drug efforts. In AFRICOM, the airspace is less contested and offers much of the same environmental advantages as CENTCOM. For example, once air superiority was established in Operation ODYESSY DAWN, RPAs were able to contribute over Libya.<sup>38</sup> The ability to continuously monitor locations without putting boots on the ground proved invaluable. The RPAs were only limited by their numbers, there were too few. As more RPAs are allocated outside of CENTCOM, this will become less of an issue. Initially, the PED provided during Operation ODYSSEY DAWN was a challenge.<sup>39</sup> Few, if any, intelligence analysts had worked FMV feeds other than for Iraq or Afghanistan. As a result, PED analysts had a sharp learning curve to understand the geographic and specific nuances of the Libyan situation.<sup>40</sup> In the future, this could be mitigated if RPAs and their regionally focused AF DCGS PED team had better familiarity with the area they are responsible for. Moreover, if local allied military personnel were collocated with the regional AF DCGS PED teams, this would enhance effectiveness. Overall, USAF RPAs can be a tool for building multilateral cooperation among allies.

## ***Conclusion***

Although tactically effective, evidence suggests United States foreign policy is suffering as a result of covert OGA RPA kinetic operations in Pakistan and other regions. A change is needed if the US has any hope of breaking the cycle of recruitment for extremists. Rather than standby and let terrorists and others use these strikes as a rallying cry, the USAF needs to employ its own RPAs across COCOMs as a counterbalance to OGA RPA operations. This will be better accomplished as OEF winds down making more USAF RPAs are available. Fortunately, this is cost-effective with reach-back PED nodes already in place at different regions across the globe. Once dispersed to other theaters USAF RPAs and their AF DCGS teammates need to be at the forefront of humanitarian and multilateral military cooperation.

At home, the USAF needs to do a better job of making the public aware of the distinction between OGA RPA and conventional USAF RPA operations. This helps justify the tax dollars already spent on these systems and may discourage legal challenges by demonstrating that RPAs can fit into the 'Just War' category of warfare. This will be reinforced if the American public sees drones as first responders in a humanitarian crisis. RPA operations in Haiti and Japan were a start, but the United States needs to do more to showcase positive intentions. This will help perpetuate an enhanced image for United States foreign policy.

The future is uncertain. However, there is high probability the USAF will be called upon to assist allies in times of need. When this happens, the USAF needs to be ready to respond, across any COCOM, with RPAs and trained AF DCGS PED crews who have the capability to disseminate both classified and unclassified information to a multitude of partners. This will help demystify the perception that all 'drones' are silent killers operating on the fringes of lawlessness and meet the goals set by President Obama in the NSS.

## END NOTES

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- <sup>31</sup> Baldor, Lolita C., "Military Weighs Cutbacks, Shifts in Drone Programs," *adn.com*, 02 Feb 2013, [www.adn.com](http://www.adn.com).

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 1.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>34</sup> Haley, Capt Jaylan., "Revelations in Haiti, The Side Effect of New Priorities for Remotely Piloted ISR Aircraft." *Air and Space Power Journal*, (Spring 2011): 45.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 46.

<sup>36</sup> Baldor, Lolita C., "Military Weighs Cutbacks, Shifts in Drone Programs," adn.com, 02 Feb 2013, [www.adn.com](http://www.adn.com).

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Clark, Lt Col Michael, USAF, (Former Commander, 27<sup>th</sup> Intelligence Squadron, 480<sup>th</sup> Wing Operations Center), interview by the author, 17 March 2013.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

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